



Government For Our People

Legislative Newsletter • 18th District • 2006 Session



Aloha Friends and Neighbors,

With the 2006 Legislature in full swing, I wanted to take this opportunity to seek your perspectives on key issues before us.

Although we are in the fortunate position of having a significant state budget surplus this year, I am mindful that even under these most favorable circumstances it is challenging to distribute the resources in a way that meets every need and to satisfy all constituencies. This is where I rely on your involvement in the process.

As you know, my priorities include assuring all of Hawaii's children quality education and learning experiences, moving towards "sustainability," and ensuring the integration of a healthy environment and a vibrant economy. Perpetuating our natural and cultural resources remain the foundation for our quality of life in Hawaii.

The enclosed survey highlights some of the many issues before us in the areas of education, housing, energy and tax policy. **Please take a few minutes to complete and return the survey.** Your responses will help inform my decisions as we grapple with these issues in the months ahead.

As always, please feel free to call or visit my office (Room 324 at the State Capitol, phone 586-6510) with your ideas, questions, or specific concerns. My staff and I will be pleased to meet with you. You may also email me at RepBerg@capitol.hawaii.gov, or follow the Legislature's actions via the Internet at www.capitol.hawaii.gov.

Lyla Berg

Representative

LYLA B. BERG

House of Representatives
State Capitol, Room 324
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

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LAWMAKERS LISTEN

East O'ahu Community Meeting

March 29, 2006 • 6:30 - 8:30 pm
Kalani High School



Sustainability of Hawaii: A Reality

During the interim, Rep. Berg also served as a member of the Hawaii 2050 Sustainability Task Force, established by the Legislature to review the State's existing long-range plans. The outcome of the Task Force was to recommend a statewide process to articulate a coherent plan "to assure the sustainability of the State for generations to come."

Most notable in the Task Force Report were issues ranging from "the conservation of natural resources, a living-wage, and a diversified economy, to perpetuating the culture and arts, providing needed social services, and addressing Hawaii's heavy reliance on distant global resources."

The Task Force recommended a broad and inclusive process for engaging public input, focusing on four areas: 1) Sustainable Communities; 2) Sustainable Environment; 3) Sustainable Economy; and 4) Sustainable Quality of Individual and Family Life, with the following core elements: Water, Land Use, Energy, Food Production, Environmental Quality, Population & Carrying Capacity, and Education for a Sustainable Hawaii.

The full Hawaii 2050 report is available online from the Office of the Auditor,
(<http://www.hawaii.gov/auditor/Categories/misc.htm>)

Early Childhood Education: A Priority

The Temporary Early Childhood Education Task Force (Act 151, Session Laws 2005) met between August and December 2005 with the purpose of engaging the early childhood learning community and government departments in establishing a framework of access and opportunity for all children from birth to 5 years old. Rep. Berg was an active member of that endeavor which resulted in the introduction of HB 3237.

As the Task Force reported, "research now confirms that a quality early learning experience is a primary indicator of school success." Further research indicates that 90% of brain growth occurs by age 5 and that for every \$1 invested in early learning, there is a savings of at least \$7 in costs for drug abuse rehabilitation, prisons, and welfare. Additionally, early learning is recognized and valued as a viable profession with needed compensation and benefits, accessible initial preparation and continuing professional development opportunities.

The full report of the Early Childhood Education Task Force is available at
http://www.hawaii.edu/hepc/projects_earlychildhood.htm.



Rep. Berg with members of the Boy Scouts, Troop 108



Rep. Berg with staff members: Meleana Judd (Legislative Aide), Ian Lind (Legislative Aide), Uluhani Haith (Office Manager), Jen Wilbur (Committee Clerk), Alexia Carvalho (Community Liaison)

“E holomua kakou me ka pono”

Let us move forward righteously

State Representative Lyla Berg

Vice-Chairman, House Committee on Education

Assistant Majority Floor Leader

Member: Energy and Environment;
Water, Land and Ocean Resources;
Hawaiian Affairs; Higher Education

Hawaii State Capitol, Room 324

Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

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2006 COMMUNITY SURVEY

The purpose of this survey is to provide an opportunity for you to comment on some of the issues facing the state. Representative Berg will take your input into consideration as she studies the issues to make the best decisions possible. **Please return this survey to Rep. Lyla Berg, State Capitol Room 324, Honolulu, HI 96813. Otherwise, you can fax it to (808) 586-6511.**

Thank you for taking the time to complete and return this survey. Your name and address are optional, however we will mail the results to those who have provided their name and mailing information. Mahalo.

SURPLUS

The State now has a surplus of approximately \$600 million. However, there are more ideas on what to do with that money than there are available funds. What do you believe is the best use of these funds? Below is list of potential areas where money could be spent or saved. Please prioritize/rank, with the total amount \$600 million:

- _____ Education: particularly for the repair and maintenance of school facilities. The current backlog is approximately \$525 million (can choose lesser amount).
- _____ University of Hawaii, specifically for the repair and maintenance of facilities. (\$165 million; can choose lesser amount)
- _____ Provide developer incentives to build rental housing and affordable ownership units (\$150 million)
- _____ Build more homeless shelters and provide additional services to slow the rate of homelessness (\$50 million)
- _____ Provide health insurance for the gap group of Hawai'i residents currently uninsured (\$150 million)
- _____ Build a new prison to address overcrowding in our current facilities and to stop sending prisoners to mainland (\$150 million)
- _____ Give a one-time tax rebate to each taxpayer of around \$150 per person. (\$150 million)
- _____ Create the Earned Income Tax Credit -- which would reduce taxes for low-income taxpayers according to income and family size OR raise the standard deduction (raising the income level above which a person must start to pay income taxes; \$22 - \$25 million each year)
- _____ Expand the income tax brackets, providing lower taxes for middle and lower income levels. (\$149 million)
- _____ Save in Rainy Day Fund: Funds to be "stashed" away for potential later emergencies
- _____ Place in Hurricane Relief Fund: Currently at \$119 million, this amount was initially for homeowners' insurance. More money could be saved for future hurricane related assistance.
- _____ Other: _____

2006 COMMUNITY SURVEY

EDUCATION

Weighted Student Formula:

In 2004, the Legislature passed Act 51 to have the Department of Education develop a weighted student formula. This provides money to schools based on specific needs of the schools and the individual student and gave schools the flexibility to determine its own priorities. Under the current weighted student formula adopted by the Board of Education, some schools are gaining money, while some schools are losing money.

Do you support utilizing some of the budget surplus to provide transition funds for schools that are receiving less money under the weighted student formula?

☐ YES ☐ NO

Early Childhood Education:

Children who are exposed to the early childhood education program are more likely to succeed when they enter kindergarten. In 2004, the Legislature created the junior kindergarten program, which provides learning opportunities for those children who are "late born." Some believe that the State needs to do more.

Do you support utilizing some of the budget surplus on providing these types of early learning programs?

☐ YES ☐ NO

EMPLOYMENT

The community colleges have responded to many workforce development initiatives in the past. With the economy booming and the nation's lowest unemployment rate, there are serious worker shortages.

Would you support state funding to be used to assist the community colleges in these new initiatives?

☐ YES ☐ NO

ENERGY

To move our state toward weaning off fossil-fuel dependence, do you support the installation of photovoltaic systems in our schools where significant roof repairs are already scheduled and where demonstrated energy savings can justify the expense of installing these systems?

☐ YES ☐ NO

Do you support the use of tax credits for homes and businesses that build photovoltaic, wind or other renewable energy systems for their buildings?

☐ YES ☐ NO

LAND USE

Do you support the selling of state land to private developers?

☐ YES ☐ NO

Do you support using more state funds to purchase "legacy lands" that have a cultural or historic significance for Hawaii's future, such as Waimea Valley?

☐ YES ☐ NO

Do you support the requirement that public buildings meet the Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) minimum standards for energy efficiency?

☐ YES ☐ NO

Please print:

Name _____

Address _____ City & Zip Code: _____

Email: _____

Please return to: Representative Lyla B. Berg; State Capitol, Room 324; Honolulu, HI 96813
Fax (808) 586-6511; Email: repberg@capitol.hawaii.gov